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TIMOR RR

TIMOR RETROSPECTIVE: TEN YEARS OF MILITARY OCCUPATION

expresso ex jill jolliffe

lisbon, december 1--It is ten years since Indonesian paratroopers landed in Dili, an intervention which opened a new and black era in East Timorese history. It is ten years, too, since the Portuguese corvette Joao Roby sailed from Atauro island after its crew witnessed the invasion, ending Portugal's physical presence in Timor--at that time reduced to 'showing the flag'--after an association of 400 years. Timorese refugees in Portugal are commemmorating the day with sadness, but the Indonesian government is also marking the occasion, as the tenth anniversary of the 'establishment of the province of East Timor'.

An article published in the Jakarta daily Sinar Harapan has called on authorities to mark the tenth anniversary by stepping up military operations:

> ...the problem of the restoration of security in the 27th province must be thoroughly dealt with. We are all aware that the problem of crushing the remnants of the [resistance] is not a simple one. In an

> interview with the wire service "Reuters" in Jakarta at the beginning of 1984, Armed Forces Commander...Gen. L.B. Moerdani explained that the efforts to wipe out the remnants.. in Timor must be handled cautiously and wisely...
>
> In the coming year, the experience of the Indonesian Armed Forces in the field of counterinsurgency and territorial operations must be maximised, both to press for the return of these remnants to society as well as to crush those who don't wish to change their attitude. The participation of the people in this effort is very important. If the water dries up, the fish will die...For the past several years, it has not just be the office of the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the UN, but also the diplomatic representatives of several western countries who have been busy serving the critics who so often and so deliberately sensationalise the situation in East Timor.

In the decade since Indonesia invaded East Timor, there have been great fluctuations in its political situation, but there have been two constant factors--the refusal of the 'fish' to die (although it has suffered high and low points, the resistance has survived), and the callous response of the international community to the fate of the small territory, which had the ill-fortune to be caught between the super-powers.

(A) (first-hand) For those of us who were in Timor in the period after 25 Abril and before the invasion, there is an especially tragic contrast

(A) Indonesia has poured economic aid into East Timor, a fact which it stresses to visiting foreign delegations, but there is something essentially illogical about giving economic aid to a territory one is simultaneously bombing. Few delegations bother to inquire how many million dollars a year Indonesia's military operations in Timor cost.

between the current situation and the infectious optimism which swept the population after the fall of the Caetano regime, the profound expectation that after years of colonial rule, democracy and independence were finally coming. With the end of colonial isolation the Timorese looked with curiosity and hope to the outside world, and, ironically, with particular hope to neighbouring Australia.

Not only did they instead suffer invasion, but the past decade has ~~highlighted the futility of~~ (DASHED) their faith in justice: whereas the world stopped in horror this year when tens of thousands of people died in a brief period in the natural calamities of Mexico City and ~~San~~Columbia, there has been no equivalent reaction to the ongoing man-made calamity in East Timor. On the Indonesians' own account 60,000 people were dead within a few weeks of the attack on Dili. Tens of thousands more have died in the decade since, and all evidence suggests the killing is continuing.

~~In the years that followed the attack on Dili, the story of the bloodbath came out. Refugees who arrived in Lisbon told how, during the landing, Indonesian soldiers indiscriminately shot~~

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after the landing in Dili, which was accompanied by mass executions on the wharf,

civilians, and in suburbs where there was resistance, in the form of snipers shooting down the paratroopers as they landed, ther were mass reprisals against the local population. There were mass executions on Dili wharf.

The FRETILIN leadership retreated from the city and streams of civilians fled with them. They had with them the radio transmitter left behind by the International Red Cross, which had been used to maintain contact between Dili and Darwin. Now FRETILIN used it to give the outside world news of the invasion, and it acted as an information lifeline for the first years of the occupation. In the next period that followed many of these civilians starved to death as food supplies became inadequate to feed the swollen population in the mountains. Some refugees managed to leave Timor clandestinely and travel to Portugal. One woman who arrived here t told me how in 1978 and 1979 she and her nine children were reduced to eating grass to survive, before deciding to surrender to Indonesian authorities.

At the time of the invasion, many of the FRETILIN leaders were in their late twenties or early thirties. Nicolau Lobato, a

strong-willed, dedicated nationalist led the resistance until early 1979. The crisis of starvation was then at its height and thousands were surrendering in order to obtain food. Lobato was ambushed and killed during an Indonesian manhunt, and other FRETILIN leaders met a similar fate.

From 1979 to 1982 there were only isolated reports of resistance, carried by refugees arriving in Portugal or letters smuggled from the territory. It was by this means that news came of an uprising in Dili on June 10, 1980 and the wave of repression which followed it. Radio contact between Timor and Australia ~~was lost~~ ENDED when FRETILIN leader Alarico Fernandes defected to the Indonesians, taking the Red Cross radio with him. ~~The external front lost~~ Regular contact with the guerillas (WAS LOST) and it was not certain who was leading the military struggle.

THE RE-ORGANISED RESISTANCE

Then in 1982 a series of coded documents reached Lisbon, sent by José Gusmão Xanana, a young central committee member who was previously known as a rather unobtrusive type. He described how he and a handful of guerillas had evaded the Indonesian dragnet and fled to the eastern zone, where they re-built the resistance from

scratch. A new generation was leading the fight--the names of some were barely known before. They went on the offensive until in April 1983 Indonesian officers agreed to a ceasefire and held talks with Xanana. However, they ignored his demand that they publicise their willingness to negotiate, especially to the UN, but FRETILIN took the precaution of smuggling out documentary evidence of the talks, including photos of Xanana sitting beside Indonesian military Commander Colonel Purwanto.

Once again the world failed to heed the East Timorese pleas. T According to refugees who were in Timor then, during this time ceasefire lasted only a few months, during which the guerillas were permitted to enter the towns carrying their weapons. They wore thei long hair tied back with yellow ribbons (Timorese warriors do not cut their hair in time of war), and even played a football match against Indonesian soldiers in Baucau, the second city of Timor. FRETILIN had proposed a peace plan to the UN, but that organisation made no attempt to send an international mission to the territory.

AFTER THE CEASEFIRE

The truce collapsed in August 1983 with an incident at Kraras, near Viqueque on the south coast, in which a group of Indonesian officials were killed by Timorese militia belonging to Indonesia's

HANSIP units, who then fled to join FRETILIN in the mountains. Col. Purwanto ordered troops in and several hundred people were reportedly massacred in reprisal (documented in Amnesty International's June 1985 report, citing independent sources). Governor Mario Carrascalão, a former UDT leader, flew immediately to Jakarta to protest to President Suharto about the killings, and Purwanto was replaced as military commander soon after.

From that time Indonesia began pouring reinforcements into Timor, and Xanana issued a call to arms. Since the famine of 1978-79 FRETILIN had told supporters to return to their villages and that they could best support the resistance by building clandestine support structures in the villages.

The success of this tactic was eloquently described in an Indonesian military handbook captured by FRETILIN in 1982 and later publicised by Amnesty International because of its instruct-

ions to Indonesian soldiers on how to administer torture. It also described the implanbation of the resistance network at village level, showing a degree of advanced organisation beyond that previously suspected by outside observers.

With FRETILIN's call to arms, fighting resumed on a new basis. Indonesia returned to its tactic of sustained aerial bombardment, used in the early days of the war, and FRETILIN's toll of Indonesians killed rose--they claimed 68 killed in 1983 and 258 in 1984, apart from the wounded. Non-FRETILIN sources, principally the Catholic Church in Dili, have supported the claim of increased Indonesian deaths.

There were also new accounts of human rights violations after the ceasefire ended. Apart from the Kraras massacre, there was the report that in December 1983 in the town of Maupitine, in the eastern Lospalos district, the headman summoned villagers to a meeting, on the orders of Indonesian authorities. Five local men were presented and the Indonesians then ordered the headman to decapitate them for alleged contacts with the resistance. This story came first from FRETILIN sources but was later independently corroborated by a Timorese now living in Portugal who

visited Maupitine shortly after the massacre and was told the story.

Current reports from resistance sources in Timor suggest that the level of conflict continues to be high (although Indonesian guns are silenced during the visit of foreign delegations). For example:

> Em todo o Timor Leste, estão dezoito batalhões das forças invasoras, dezasseis no sector Leste [eastern sector]. Matebian, Uaimea e Aserca voltaram a ser alvo das metralhadores inimigas, durante os princípios de Abril ...O antigo colégio feminino é a base deles, com tanques e canhões em posição. Colunas militares, "satgas", circulam de um lado para outro transportando munições e pessoal, nos famosos "mercedes" camiões

Early this year the resistance suffered a blow with the defection of veteran strategist Mauk Moruk to the Indonesian side, where he reportedly assisted in the planning of an offensive against the guerillas. Reports since suggest that the damage done by his defection was not as great as it could have been, but it was symptomatic that he apparently surrendered due to demoralisation

at lack of outside support. Militarily, the resistance seems to be and it has re-established its radio link with Australia, continuing strong,/but it is fighting in the hope that a new diplomatic breakthrough will again provide respite, as this document from Timor, written on October 28, shows:

> ...pelas práticas diárias do povo nas vilas nota-se e ouve-se pelas conversas que de uma maneira geral todos depositam as suas esperanças nos representantes que estão no Exterior. E todos solicitam para...acelerar a Política Externa para o mais pressa possível alcançarmos a nossa Independencia. Tambem apelam para um melhor co-ordinação dos trabalhos da frente externa a fim de levar a aspiraçao do Povo Maubere sempre a frente

A DECADE OF TIMOR DIPLOMACY

~~It is the story of Timor's~~ (The story of Timor's) military struggle for liberty in the past decade is a story of lonely heroism, the history of international diplomacy concerning the territory is a shabby one. The philosophy of expediency has prevailed.

The only consistent diplomatic backing for East Timorese self-determination has come from the Lusophone African countries. The Timor case has failed to attract significant support from western democracies, despite their expressed concern about human

rights, while the socialist countries have been lukewarm in their support--both China and the Soviet Union are compromised by trade or other political interests with Jakarta, although they nominally support FRETILIN at the UN.

As far as the western countries are concerned, U.S. policies supporting Indonesia as one of the last bastions of anti-Communism in south-east Asia tend to determine their thinking. In spite of several Congressional hearings on alleged human rights violations in Timor, American policy has stood solidly behind Jakarta.

Because of its regional influence Australia could have played a fulcral role in helping Portugal bring about an orderly decolonisation. Instead, it backed Indonesian policy from the outset (not only since Prime Minister Hawke's stand this year as has been erroneously reported in some quarters). It hypocritically hoped to distance itself from any excesses which might result, but public opinion has repeatedly forced successive Australian governments to lengthy justifications of their stand.

As the administering power, Portugal has recently played a

more active role in seeking a negotiated solution, largely because President Eanes has insisted on it. The issue risks being buried ~~in~~ when his mandate ends, unless the Timorese can project it into the current presidential campaign.

The talks underway in New York between Portugal and Indonesia have established a framework for a solution, but will be meaningless until they include Timorese representatives, and attempts to bring about a ceasefire in the territory itself. Former Foreign Minister Jaime Gama met for the first time with FRETILIN representative Jose Ramos Horta ~~in New York~~ this year, but this is a long step from broadening discussions to include Timorese representatives and so far discussion has avoided substantive questions of sovereignty, focusing on piecemeal humanitarian aspects of the problem.

Throughout this decade a common response to the Timor problem is that it is a 'lost cause'. It is an inappropriate expression used by people who have ~~xxxxxx~~ not experienced invasion or foreign occupation in their time. In hundreds of interviews with

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Timorese refugees since 1975, the ~~meaning of living~~ daily reality of living under foreign occupation has become clear ~~to me~~ clear to me: it means that the privacy of homes can be violated at any time, that citizens are subject to arbitrary arrest and execution, that women are raped, non-military targets bombed--in short, that there is no rule of law. If Portugal was under an invader's boot, cut off from the rest of the world, could any Portuguese accept a description of his or her fate in terms of whether or not it represented a 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' cause? Would anyone have thought of referring to Nazi-occupied Europe in these terms?

Rivers of blood have flowed in Timor since 1975, but ~~it~~ if the invasion had been less bloody, if only 20,000 people had died as opposed to the 200,000 estimated by international human rights organisations, this would not alter the fact that the Timorese have been robbed of their political freedom and that their slavery denies the validity of democratic principles. ENDS